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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Letter dated 24 November 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In the context of the General Assembly's consideration of agenda item 36 on the question of Palestine, I have the honour to make the following statement:

The State of Israel was created on 14 May 1948, the day on which the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland withdrew its forces and terminated its mandate. The international community is still awaiting the creation of an Arab State, good neighbourly and friendly towards the State of Israel, in conformity with the Partition Plan approved by the General Assembly on 29 November 1947. The creation of such a State would put an end to the tragic Arab-Israeli conflict which for over four decades has inflicted untold suffering on the peoples of the Middle East region. It is in this spirit that my delegation wishes to take part in, and make a positive contribution to, the present debate.

After the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Washington in 1993, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization consistently demonstrated their courage and did their utmost to promote the peace process and allow it to move ahead. The international community welcomed the positive direction taken by the overall situation in the Middle East, seeing it as a crucial stage on the road to the attainment of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent Palestinian State. To our very great regret, in the past two years the situation in the region has deteriorated dramatically as a result of the building of new settlements at Har Homa Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem. The parties concerned have lost all confidence in each other and a feeling of widespread frustration prevails. We have all been witnesses to the acts of violence, killings and even armed clashes that have gravely imperilled the peace process approved and so strongly supported by the international community. My delegation considers

it essential that the parties concerned should urgently restore a climate of mutual confidence and pursue their negotiations in good faith in order to expedite the achievement of an overall settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, as well as other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. Only such a salutary approach can save the peace process from the danger that currently threatens it.

As you know, the question of Palestine is not a new one. It is the subject of a difficult debate that has been going on for almost five decades. In this new era of dialogue and international cooperation, the world cannot allow this conflict to go on indefinitely. The two parties concerned, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, should be helped to settle their dispute without further delay, thereby contributing to the restoration of peace, security and cooperation in this global trouble spot.

Of course, the road to peace is not an easy one. Several obstacles still remain. The two parties should do everything in their power to prevent the peace process from being derailed. We believe that this process, which is supported by the entire international community, has every chance of success. The cause of peace is a just one. It represents the hope and the profound aspiration of the peoples of the region to live together in harmony and mutual understanding.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter distributed as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 36.

(Signed) Alounkéo KITTIKHOUN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative